

Week Ending Friday, August 18, 2000

**Written Responses to Questions  
Submitted by the Arabic-Language  
Newspaper Al Hayat**

*August 10, 2000*

***Middle East Peace Process***

**Q.** Do you have any special message for the Arab world after Camp David?

**The President.** We have in the next few months an historic chance to resolve the Palestinian issue. It is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and we can and must resolve it on a basis that's fair, honorable, and lasting. Together, we need to seize this opportunity, or it will be lost. The parties cannot do it alone. We need the help of our Arab friends in the region. And we need an approach that resolves problems in a practical and fair way so that the principles that guide Arab-Israeli peace—comprehensiveness and implementation of United Nations Security Resolutions 242 and 338, including land for peace—can be realized in a way that meets the needs of both sides. What is fair and just for Palestinians and Arabs must also be fair and just for Israelis. There cannot be a winner and a loser in these negotiations. We must have two winners, or we will lose the peace.

I know that there is a deep sense of grievance in the Arab world, and through nearly 8 years of working for peace alongside Chairman Arafat, I understand the suffering and pain of the Palestinians. But I also know that the only pathway to realize Palestinian aspirations is through negotiations, through the process of give and take where each side can have its needs met and its hopes realized. I urge all those in this region committed to peace to join with me and to seize this historic moment.

The opportunity to work for a lasting peace between the Palestinian and Israeli people has been among the most meaningful and rewarding aspects of my Presidency. I am motivated in these efforts by the possibility of a better future for all of the peoples in

the region. We must all remain focused on this better future, a future in which the Palestinian people might finally achieve through negotiations their aspiration of a Palestinian State recognized by and integrated with the world, at peace and working to address the needs of the Palestinian people.

***U.S. Role in the Peace Process***

**Q.** How would you characterize the American role during Camp David talks? Do you see that role evolving in the future, and if so, in what direction?

**The President.** The talks at Camp David were revolutionary in their detail, their directness, and their honesty about what each side needed to reach an agreement. I worked personally—sometimes all night long—with both sides to advance this process. Both sides, both Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak, worked hard and in good faith on difficult problems. Sometimes we proposed ideas, suggestions, even language. We made progress across the board. At the same time, our role was not and will never be a substitute for direct Israeli-Palestinian engagement. We will need both levels of interaction to reach an agreement.

***U.S. Embassy***

**Q.** You have repeatedly urged the two sides of the conflict not to take any unilateral action that could block progress in the peace process. However, you told Israeli television in your recent interview that you are reviewing the decision to move the Embassy to Jerusalem by the end of the year. Don't you consider this announcement a contradiction of the stated American policy and an impediment to your peace efforts?

**The President.** From the beginning of my administration, one factor has guided me: to take no action that I judged would harm the peace process. That still is my guiding principle. The 2 weeks I spent at Camp David

underscores my commitment to doing everything I can to help both sides reach an agreement.

With regard to the Embassy, I stated that I would review the issue by the end of the year, and I will do so. It is my great hope that by then Israelis and Palestinians—with our help—will have reached an agreement on Jerusalem that meets their needs. Then I would also be able to inaugurate an American Embassy in the capital of a Palestinian State. I firmly believe that the Jerusalem problem can be resolved in a way in which both sides' national aspirations can be realized.

### **Jerusalem**

**Q.** Many Arabs consider President Clinton as the most sympathetic to the suffering of the Palestinian people and their political aspirations and the only leader in their history to have achieved breakthroughs in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Are you concerned that taking a position in the issue of Jerusalem at this stage would hurt not only Arabs but Muslims and Christians around the world?

**The President.** I have worked hard to understand the plight of the Palestinian people, to understand their aspirations, their losses, and their frustrations. My trip to Gaza and the opportunity to address the Palestinian National Council with Chairman Arafat was critical to this process and a great honor for me.

I am guided in my efforts by one central goal, the need to promote a fair and honorable solution to each of the core issues that both sides find acceptable. Jerusalem is a difficult issue because of its critical importance to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It is a unique problem which requires a unique solution. In this regard, Jerusalem is really three cities: It is a municipal city like any other with problems of environment, traffic control, and city services; it is a holy city which embodies the values of three great religious traditions and which contains religious sites sacred to three religions; and it is a political city which symbolizes the national aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians. Resolving the issue of Jerusalem means dealing with all three of these dimensions in a way that

harms no one's interests and promotes the interests of all. And I believe it can be done.

**Q.** The Camp David summit was a landmark in terms of tackling for the first time the core issues, and at the same time it did not produce the hoped-for final agreement. Are you worried that reducing your personal involvement in the process would lead to a speedy deterioration of the situation?

**The President.** One of the remarkable aspects of the Camp David experience was that Israelis and Palestinians engaged on the core issues in an unprecedented manner. They broke taboos and discussed issues seriously and not on the basis of mere rhetoric and slogans. I am ready to do my part. To do so effectively, both sides will need to be ready to make historic decisions and, on the most sensitive issues, recognize that both must be satisfied.

### **Confidentiality of the Peace Process**

**Q.** Did you receive a letter from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat recently? What can you tell us about it?

**The President.** One of the reasons Arabs and Israelis continue to look to the United States for help is that we protect their confidences. I have great respect for Chairman Arafat, and I'm sure you understand that I'm not going to start now by talking publicly about letters either from him or Prime Minister Barak.

### **Further Negotiations**

**Q.** Are you willing to issue an unconditional invitation for Arafat and Prime Minister Barak to come to Washington and give peace another shot?

**The President.** I'm willing to do anything if it will help Israelis and Palestinians reach an agreement. At the same time, I know that the two sides need to reflect on what happened at Camp David and work together. Without an Israeli-Palestinian foundation on the substance of the issues, the United States cannot play its role effectively. That process got a big boost at Camp David. It needs to be continued now. Both leaders must be ready to make historic decisions.

***Egypt's Role in the Peace Process***

**Q.** There has been criticism of Egypt's role. What is your view?

**The President.** The fact is that all that has happened since the original Camp David in September 1978, including Madrid and Oslo, is a vindication of the courageous and visionary policy of Egypt. Egypt was a pioneer for peace and continues to be a key partner for the United States. We agree on the fundamentals of the peace process, and we will not be able to reach an Israeli-Palestinian agreement on these core issues without close consultation with Egypt. We are engaged in such a process today.

NOTE: The responses referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. The questions and answers were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 11. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on the Executive Order  
To Improve Access to Services for  
Persons With Limited English  
Proficiency**

*August 11, 2000*

Today I am issuing an Executive order to help people with limited English proficiency (LEP) access Federal services. Many people who are eligible for Federal services cannot effectively use those services because they are not proficient in English. The Executive order directs Federal agencies to improve the language-accessibility of their programs by December 11, 2000. This initiative complements our commitment to promoting programs to help individuals learn English.

I am concerned that language barriers are preventing the Federal Government and recipients of Federal financial assistance from effectively serving a large number of people in this country who are eligible to participate in their programs. Failure to systematically confront language barriers can lead to unequal access to Federal benefits based on national origin and can harm the mission of Federal agencies. Breaking down these barriers will allow individuals with limited

English proficiency to more fully participate in American society.

This Executive order directs Federal agencies to break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance across agencies and among all recipients of Federal financial assistance. Under this flexible standard, agencies and recipients must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to their programs and activities, taking into account a variety of considerations. Among the factors to be considered are the number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population, the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program, the nature and importance of the service provided by the program, and the available resources.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Remarks at a Reception for  
Representative Xavier Becerra in  
Los Angeles, California**

*August 11, 2000*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Let me say, first, how delighted I am to be here with Xavier and Carolina. Thank you, Fermin Cuza, for being here and standing up for him. I thank my good friend Luis Gutierrez from Chicago for bringing his family here today. We were laughing—when I was running for President in early 1992, he was out there running with me. We were standing by the entrance to the El in Chicago early one morning, shaking hands, when only my mother thought I could be elected President. [Laughter] And 8 years later, it's worked out pretty well.

I want to thank Tom Umberg for the distinguished work he did in the Clinton-Gore administration, and I thank you for being here. And Councilman Pacheco, thank you. And Mike Feuer, who's gone, I have to mention him because he's one of the guys that voted to have the city make a contribution to our convention so we could be here today. [Laughter] And I want to thank him.

Let me say, I was profoundly honored to present Cruz Reynoso with the Medal of Freedom, and I thank you for coming here,